The 'liberation' of the Qumran manuscripts in 1991 has started an avalanche of books which ten years later still shows no sign of settling down. Many of them represent the printed version of specialised conferences held in various parts of the world.

Johannes Zimmermann's study of the messianic content of the Qumran writings is based on his doctoral dissertation presented to the Theological Faculty of the University of Tübingen in 1996. Supervised by Martin Hengel, the work is, as may be expected, a painstakingly thorough examination of all the Scrolls material closely or remotely connected with the theme of the Messiah. Each passage is reproduced in Hebrew or Aramaic, translated into German, and interpreted in minute detail. The original angle of approach is determined by the question whether Jesus was a messianic character and by the origin of 'Christian' Christology. In his final conclusion Zimmermann states that Qumran messianism displays so many features in common with Old Testament and inter-Testamental Judaism that one is no longer justified to consider it as sectarian theology. In fact, it represents the general religious ideology of the contemporaries of Jesus.

As is often the case with doctoral theses, the author of this learned volume is so busy with studying and assessing other people's opinions that no time is left for him to advance his potentially original views. Nevertheless this book is a very reliable source for the survey of the Dead Sea Scrolls' contribution to the topic of the Jewish Messiah and for a quick grasp of the many and varied scholarly opinions on the subject.

I hope I will be forgiven for taking this opportunity to take a firm stand against the interpretation of meholelot (from מְהוֹלֶלֶת) as 'dancing girls' in 4Q285 fragment 7, line 5 (cf. DJD XXXVI, pp. 238–41; Zimmermann refers to it as fr. 5 on pp. 84, 87–88). In the editio princeps in DJD (p. 239) the editors (P. S. Alexander and myself) render the term as 'wounds' (from מְהוֹלֶלֶת). Before the publication of the DJD volume in 2000, a 'scholarly tradition' began to establish itself in favour of 'dancing girls' (see M. G. Abegg, JBL 113, 1994, pp. 81–91; L. H. Schiffman, Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls, 1994, pp. 344–47, and Zimmermann, pp. 84, 87–88). Before tradition often repeated is taken to be an established fact, here is a firm caveat. It is hard, indeed impossible, to imagine that dancing females participated in the victory ritual of the Sons of Light. In the War Scroll (1QM 7:3–4) it is clearly asserted that the presence of no woman would be tolerated in the camp of the army of Light from the moment of their departure...
from Jerusalem until their victorious return to the holy city. In my view, this statement buries once and for all the rendering of meholelot as dancing girls. The fact that in IQM 12:15 and 19:7 we encounter women shouting with joy does not diminish the strength of the refutation because these ‘daughters of my people’ are supposed to perform their singing in Jerusalem itself and not on the battlefield.

Simultaneously with Zimmermann’s volume the same publishing house issued a collection of twelve essays on messianism edited by Charlesworth and his colleagues. Three of these lectures were first presented at the seminars of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (SNTS) held in 1995 and 1996. Four more are revised versions of earlier published articles and the rest are fresh publications. These essays clothe Zimmermann’s texts with interpretative apparel. There are eight general surveys, three of them by Charlesworth and one each by Lichtenberger, Oegema, Ferdinand Dexinger and John J. Collins, and M. G. Abegg with C. A. Evans. Three articles discuss special documents (4Q369 by Evans, 4Q252 by Oegema and 4Q246 by J. Zimmermann). A bibliography of Qumran messianism compiled by Abegg, Evans and Oegema is also appended to the volume.

The three collections of lectures delivered at learned congresses which have been listed above all contain significant contributions to the study of the Scrolls mostly by well known experts. To review each of them would take up more space than a journal can afford. Suffice it to state that Qumran between the Old and New Testaments includes the papers read at a Scandinavian conference on the Scrolls at Schaeffergarden in Denmark in 1995. All but one of the essays which make up Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls originated in a conference at Trinity West University in British Columbia in Canada in 1999. As for The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after their Discovery, it is a monumental compendium containing papers from everybody who is somebody in Qumran research. They deal with the biblical and non-biblical Qumran texts, Qumran history, archaeology and language, texts from neighbouring sites, dating, restoration and preservation of the manuscripts, varying perspectives, and finally the papers read at the final session on the illuminated plateau of Qumran with the thermometer indicating 40 degrees Celsius at night. The music specially composed for the occasion was loud enough to wake up the dead.

GEZA VERMES


This collection of articles by Tessa Rajak will be welcomed by scholars in the field of Hellenistic history and classical studies, and not just by scholars who deal with ancient Judaism. The collection contains four parts embracing many fields of scholarship. Here I will mention some of the articles in this rich collection. Part One deals with the ‘Greeks and Jews’ and has important contributions on Hasmonean kingship and the martyr’s portrait in Jewish-Greek literature, as well as Judaism and Hellenism revisited; the latter has not been previously published. Part Two is devoted entirely to Josephus and complements Rajak’s book on Josephus (Josephus: The Historian and his Society). In this section she deals with Agrippa II’s speech, ethnic identities in Josephus (new article), Josephus and Justus of Tiberias, Josephus and the Essenes, etc. Part Three deals with the Jewish diaspora and Jewish epigraphy. Here too Rajak introduces an article not published before: ‘Jews, Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Sardis: Models of Interaction’. Part Four is an epilogue that deals inter alia with Jews